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## BOOK REVIEWS

THE SONG OF HUGH GLASS. By John G. Neihardt. With notes by Julius T. House, head of the Department of English at the State Normal School, Wayne, Nebraska. New York. Macmillan. 1921.

*The Song of Hugh Glass* is a poem, narrating the adventures of the trappers of the western plains during the period before the coming of the settlers. The scene of the action is along the Missouri River and its tributaries in the country northwest of Omaha as far as the Milk River. The author says, "the following narrative is based on an episode taken from that much neglected portion of our history, the era of the American Fur Trade;" and, "The Hugh Glass episode is to be found in Chittenden's 'History of the American Fur Trade' where it is quoted from its three printed sources. \* \* \* The present narrative begins after that military fiasco known as the Leavenworth Campaign against the Aricaras, which took place at the mouth of the Grand River in what is now South Dakota." Mr. Neihardt's purpose, as he says in his introduction, is to tell "for the young men and women of my country" the story of those men who "were direct descendants, in the epic line, of all the heroes of our Aryan race that have been celebrated by the poets of the past. \* \* \* They went as torchbearers in the van of our westering civilization."

As literature, *The Song of Hugh Glass* is not great; as history, the incidents composing the plot are unimportant and the characters involved, comparatively obscure; but as a textbook, the poem is good. The publication of such a book for use in our schools shows a decidedly commendable desire to get away from "the classics" which have been for so many years a contributing factor to the dislike for poetry prevalent in the minds of many freshmen in our colleges. The author of *The Song of Hugh Glass* has tried to tell an interesting story in verse, and he has succeeded. His heroic couplets are at times too obviously designed to make the reader enlarge his vocabulary, and sometimes they are a bit forced, but on the whole they show a decided poetic imagination and, more to the point, they hold the reader's attention.

Mr. Neihardt has, I think, exaggerated the historical importance of the story he tells. His object is not, as he implies in the introduction, to inform the youth of America, but to give them a poem that they can appreciate and understand. If he needs any justification for his work, he has it in the fact that he has given to American children an interesting account of a type of life in which they are all interested, a type of life which has too often been exploited by the sentimental sensationalist.

In the present edition, the notes by Professor House are designed to make the pupil read intelligently and to enhance his literary appreciation.

For teachers in North Carolina, *The Song of Hugh Glass* is valuable as an example of a fresh treatment of new materials that appeal to the interests of the pupils and encourage them to enjoy rather than to fear poetry. The poem has no local interest here, but it and others of its kind should have a place in the curriculum as a stimulant to poetic appreciation and an introduction to greater poems.—W. D. MACM.

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ENGLISH PROBLEMS IN THE SOLVING, FOR THE JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS. Sarah E. Simmons, M. A., head of the Department of English, Washington, D. C., High Schools (Scott, Foresman and Company. 1920).

Composition and literature should be taught in separate courses; one-half the time in junior high school should be given to composition; by far the greater part of the time in composition classes should be given to oral expression; letter-writing should form the major part of written composition work in secondary schools; the failure of the schools to teach punctuation is due to the inadequate drill fostered by the unfortunate fear of "deadening" the work; the study of punctuation begins with the teaching of grammar; there should be some study of the short story and of Shakespeare in each year of the high school course; a "middle course" should be pursued in the teaching of the history of literature. These are some of the definite convictions voiced in *English Problems in the Solving*, a book made up of summer school lectures by the author and of additional essays written by Miss Emily F. Sleman and Miss Anne McColm.

Comment that is usually enthusiastic and always sympathetic (though skepticism is expressed concerning measurement scales in composition) marks the discussion of such topics as dramatization, socialization of the English class, correlation, supervised study, minimum essentials, student criticism of themes, and imitation as a means of appreciation of literature. There are practical hints on the teaching of spelling, the assignment, letter-writing, the use of the magazine, oral English, the "problem of the start," etc. One chapter is given to the teaching of Burke, Shakespeare, and the Odyssey. Bibliographies are provided; and very free use is made of quotations from standard authorities as well as from recent contributors to *The English Journal*, *The English Leaflet*, and the *Illinois Bulletin*.

The book is sane, as well as bright, although some teachers will doubtless notice what appears to be an over-enthusiastic optimism here and there about the response of the student to some of the new-fangled

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schemes for wheedling him into a better command of the language and a more satisfying knowledge of the literature of his people; for example, in the discussion of minimum achievements in the history of English literature (pp. 176-77), the double-grade system of marking compositions (p. 105), and the imaginative recreation of the life of a past period (p. 214). The attic-laboratory method of demonstrating the value of magazines (p. 171) would surely be inapplicable in many communities. But this, possible over-confidence, merely serves to emphasize a great virtue of the book, its forward-looking attitude.

The precepts and cautions will serve as a useful guide and stimulus to young teachers and should be distinctly helpful as well to older teachers, who may be keeping too doggedly to the beaten paths.—W. F. T.

At a meeting of the executive committee of the North Carolina Council of English Teachers, which met in Greensboro, November 5, Miss Jeanie Gary, of the Goldsboro schools, was appointed secretary to fill the unexpired term of Miss Annie Beam. Miss Beam resigned the secretaryship upon giving up her position as teacher of English in the Greensboro City Schools to accept a position in the Department of Romance Language of the North Carolina College for Women. Miss Gary is a graduate of Randolph-Macon College for Women and a teacher of several years' successful experience.

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